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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Eighteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 8TH MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 30 April 1998, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. ALSTON

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GE.98-15929 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS:

(a) REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT (continued)

Initial report of Nigeria (continued) (E/1990/5/Add.31, E/C.12/Q/NIGERIA/1)

At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Nigeria took places at the Committee table.

Article 8

1. Mr. SIBBEL (International Labour Organization) said that in May 1960, Nigeria had ratified ILO Convention No. 87 concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize. Over the past two years, the ILO's supervisory mechanisms, the Committee of Experts, the International Labour Conference Committee on the Application of Recommendations and Conventions (CARC) and the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA), had made frequent mention of Nigeria's restructuring of 42 unions into 29. In November/December 1997, the Committee of Experts, quoting article 2 of Convention No. 87, had requested the Nigerian Government to abolish the legislation under which the restructuring had taken place.

2. With regard to the dissolution of the elected executive councils of the two key unions, the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) and the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Associations (PENGASSAN) and their replacement by single administrators, the CFA in cases Nos. 1793 and 1935, had, on the basis of Article 3 of Convention No. 87, urged the Nigerian Government to restore the right to organize to both workers' and employers' organizations and had commented on the situation of the two detained union leaders to whom the Committee had referred. Although the Nigerian Government had said that the two men had been arrested for engaging in political activities, the CFA maintained that economic and social issues had been at stake, although not directly linked to the dispute, and that sufficient grounds for a strike had existed.

3. The CHAIRPERSON, replying to a query by the Nigerian delegation as to the role of the ILO in the Committee, explained that the Committee had always held the principle that it was open to any information available from any United Nations agency that was specifically relevant to the report under consideration.

4. Mr. SIBBEL (International Labour Organization) said that the CFA also considered that in the absence of any information on the charges brought against the unionists or the sentences passed on them, the men had been detained for their union activities. The International Labour Conference in 1996 had adopted a special paragraph condemning Nigeria's continued failure to implement Convention No. 87 and the ILO Governing Body had subsequently decided to set up an independent Commission of Enquiry under Article 26.4 because of the Government's refusal to allow a direct contact mission. The

Commission would base its findings on hearings and, where possible, visits to Nigeria and would report to the Director General of the ILO. If Nigeria were to be found in violation, it could take its case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

5. In many countries strikes in essential services were prohibited by law, but the type of activities which Governments deemed to be detrimental to public order, the general interest or economic development varied widely from country to country. The ILO Committee of Experts considered essential services to be only those which, if interrupted, would endanger the life, personal health or safety of the population. It had not issued a specific comment on the characterization of the oil industry as an essential industry in Nigeria.

Article 11

6. Mr. PILLAY pointed out that questions 32-35 of the list of issues (E/C.12/Q/NIGERIA/1) had not been answered. Specifically in relation to question No. 32, he wondered whether the delegation agreed with the estimate that there were 7 million people homeless in Nigeria. Was it true that 35 per cent of the income of the lower-paid workers went on housing, and that 80 per cent of the population lived in uninhabitable houses, unable to afford decent housing because of their low incomes, high rents and galloping inflation?

7. It had been estimated that over one million people had been affected by forced evictions. What measures was the Government taking to remedy the situation of those persons? Had the Government taken into account the provisions of General Comments 4 and 7 of the Committee, which required prior consultation, compensation and resettlement of the victims of evictions, and would it take them into account in the event of future evictions?

8. In relation to question No. 35, it appeared that in May 1996 the Nigerian Government had flouted a Federal High Court order and forcibly evicted people from Harvey Road in Lagos. Was such action compatible with the rule of law and was it likely to restore public confidence in the judiciary?

9. Lastly, the delegation was asked to comment on the information that private property and personal belongings had in various instances been destroyed in the course of forcible eviction without payment of compensation.

10. Mr. RIEDEL, referring specifically to article 11.1 and to paragraph 51 of the revised report, where it was stated that there was a deliberate Government policy to build houses and rent them at subsidized rents to civil servants, or in the alternative provide housing loans and housing allowances to all workers in both the public and private sectors, said that it appeared that in 1991 a national housing scheme had been proposed whereby workers earning more than 3,000 naira per month would pay 2.5 per cent of their salaries into a fund in exchange for mortgages. How many people had contributed to the National Housing Fund and what percentage of contributors had benefitted from it? Was it true that very few people had ever received

the loans, and if so, why? What had happened to the substantial sum of money, estimated at some 1.5 billion naira, which had been paid into the Fund by deductions at source?

11. Under the National Housing Programme set up in 1993, Nigerians had been invited to deposit 40 per cent of the cost of building a house and to enter into a contract with the authorities on the firm promise that there would be no price variation due to inflation and that the houses would be delivered on schedule. In 1995 Major-General Adisa had stated that only 18,500 of the promised 121,000 units were being constructed and the price of the houses had risen by 350 per cent, from 70,000 to 350,000 naira.

12. By 1998 not even 5 per cent of the promised houses had been delivered. How many persons had paid for houses under the National Housing Programme and how many had benefitted from the payments? Why had refunds of deposits been refused to people wishing to withdraw from the programme because they could not afford the seven-fold price increase, bearing in mind the great difficulty which many would have had in raising the original amount?

13. What steps had the State taken in respect of the right of the people of the oil-producing communities suffering from pollution, constant oil spills and gas flares to feed themselves? Had any compensation or resettlement schemes been developed for those affected or had they simply been evicted? In response to question No. 38 of the list of issues, the Nigerian Government had commented in paragraph 5 of its revised report that there were incessant clashes with inhabitants of oil-producing areas. What was being done for the people with a view to avoiding those clashes?

14. Given that oil accounted for a large proportion of the national revenue in Nigeria and was therefore vital to the Government, why could Nigerians obtain petrol only on the black market or by waiting in long queues at the pumps, sometimes for up to three days?

15. In conurbations like Lagos where a two to three-hour drive to and from work was not unusual, people were totally dependent on transportation, and petrol was consequently essential to meeting their needs under article 11.1. In 1995 there had been a 300 per cent increase in petrol prices, with the claim that the proceeds were to be used to improve infrastructures. What infrastructural improvements had been made, bearing in mind that it had been reported to the Committee that since 1995 infrastructure in Nigeria had been decaying? Facts and figures would be useful in that connection.

16. Mr. SADI asked whether the delegation would agree that whereas oil was usually considered to be a blessing, in Nigeria's case it had become a curse, judging by the environmental devastation and river pollution in the Ogoni areas, and the transformation of its agriculture-based economy, in which food had not been a problem, to an oil-producing economy, resulting in serious problems of malnutrition, especially among children and the poor majority? Could the delegation confirm the Committee's information that oil exploration and exploitation were linked to corruption in Nigeria?

17. Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN, drawing the delegation's attention to General Comment No. 7 on the right to adequate housing and the recognition that women were particularly vulnerable to acts of violence and sexual abuse when they were made homeless, observed that all reports on forced eviction in Nigeria had stated that women were frequently verbally abused, beaten and raped, and left homeless and poverty-stricken after eviction. What social and economic support had the Government extended to the women who were victims of such violence in relation to forced eviction?

18. Mr. TEXIER said that a report to the Committee in May 1997 had referred to the eviction by the Ministry of Labour and Housing of some 250,000 street traders from streets and areas beneath bridges in Lagos after only 7 days' notice. In the process of eviction, their merchandise and shelters had been destroyed but no compensation had ever been paid. Many of the victims had paid taxes to the authorities which would have entitled them to stay on for six months to a year and to much longer notice, and alternative locations had been difficult to find. What legislation covered circumstances such as those and why was no proper notice been given or compensation paid?

19. Mr. WIMER asked whether the primary and secondary petrochemicals industry was controlled by the same company that was in charge of oil exploration in Nigeria and in what other fields it operated.

20. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUITRAGEÑO asked whether any special consideration was given to the elderly and to children when the families that normally cared for them were forcibly evicted from their homes, bearing in mind the special needs of those two vulnerable groups? Were women given any priority in the matter of housing or rehousing? Could they obtain mortgages on their own account or was a husband's permission required?

21. Mr. OSAH (Nigeria), replying to questions raised, said that although he had no figures on the homeless, the figure of 7 million seemed most improbable; it might include the many who slept in the streets but who were not necessarily homeless, and the large numbers moving to the cities in search of work, who were usually homeless only temporarily, until they found alternative accommodation.

22. The questions concerning inadequate housing appeared to be based on the view that the whole of Nigeria was a shanty town where no decent accommodation or drinking water was available. That was not true, certainly of Lagos and other urban areas. Suitable and adequate accommodation with all the basic facilities was provided for workers: a 3 or 4-bedroomed flat or bungalow in the case of senior Government officials and 1 or 2-bedroomed flats for the lower brackets, according to their status in the service. Workers in the private sector were provided with very good home and office accommodation.

23. In the case of the apparent disregard of an order of the Federal High Court in Lagos, to which Mr. Pillay had referred, the Government's decision to proceed with the Harvey Road project had been prompted by environmental considerations. After the decision had been made to rebuild the area and provide improved accommodation, consultations had been held with the tenants and compensation paid, as in similar cases. Despite the lengthy period of notice, the people living in the Harvey Road had been unwilling to move and

the Government had been forced to take action. In a similar rebuilding project which had taken place in Abuja, the people had been resettled without incident. He assured the Committee that the Military Governor in Lagos, who had jurisdiction over the Harvey Road estate, was a fine officer, very popular with the people, who would never have evicted anyone without adequate preparation and compensation. As far as the rule of law was concerned, therefore, he believed that the High Court's decision had been respected.

24. A number of questions had been asked about the National Housing Scheme and about what had happened to the money deposited by contributors. It had also been charged that, by the time the housing was completed, prices for it had doubled or tripled. Such an increase was inevitable at a time when overall prices were rising steadily. Normally, contributors were warned that the final payment could be subject to review.

25. Mr. RIEDEL said that he had realized that the delegation would probably offer the rate of inflation as an excuse. It was true that inflation had been very high in the last 10 years. He had therefore asked an additional question: namely, why people faced with a fundamental change of circumstances were not able, when the housing was not available at the price which they had been promised, to withdraw their deposits?

26. Mr. OSAH (Nigeria) said that there was almost always a proviso regarding a possible increase in the final price in all such projects. Moreover, a certain amount of the contribution was always not refundable, on account of administrative costs. If there were no provisos of that kind, people were entitled to apply for a refund and to have their money returned. There were cases in Lagos where that had happened. For administrative reasons, of course, the repayment would take time.

27. Mr. WIMER said that the important point was the nature of the contract the contributors were obliged to sign. Unfortunately, housing schemes of the kind described tended to lead to fraud the world over, not just in Nigeria. If housing was promised at a particular price within a particular period of time, failure to provide it was a breach of contract. Persons not familiar with the system were easily deceived as to their rights.

28. The CHAIRPERSON pointed out that the delegation's responses to the questions were not answering the Committee's needs. Certain events had been alleged, and, unless the Committee could find a reason to doubt that they had occurred, it must conclude that they had in fact done so. In the absence of any effective rebuttal, it had to draw its own conclusions.

29. Mr. RATTRAY said that if the Committee could be provided with a model contract for the scheme in question, it would be possible to prove or disprove the allegations.

30. Mr. OSAH (Nigeria) said that his delegation would try to obtain a copy of such a contract from the Ministry of Works and Housing. On the question of notice and compensation, he was aware that hard evidence was needed. Nevertheless, inferences could be drawn, and he had used his reference to the

Governor General - who had acted with generosity in one situation, allowing notice of six months, and would therefore have been unlikely to do otherwise on another occasion - to buttress his argument that due notice had been given and compensation paid in the Harvey Road project.

31. Mr. AHMED (Nigeria) said that evictions were carried out in Nigeria, but their character depended on the circumstances under which they arose. Many were carried out in order to improve tenants' living conditions. Reference had already been made to the migration from the country to the cities. It was such rural migration which had led to the vast Maroko slum in Lagos. The world over people moved from the hinterland to the city to reap the advantages of city life, often ending up in ghettos with their attendant evils of overcrowding, insanitary conditions and crime. The Government was trying to alleviate such problems by creating a different type of settlement for those people, on the lines of those provided by the international consortia engaged in vast public works projects in Nigeria, such as the great dams being built to provide hydroelectricity. In those cases, people in the area were evacuated, after receiving compensation, and a new settlement was provided into which they could move at once with all their belongings. Eviction in Nigeria was not punitive: often it led to greatly improved quality of life.

32. He had himself been reluctant to enter the National Housing Scheme, although as a civil servant he would have been eligible. Change was always resisted. By 1994, some trade union members had actually taken the Government to court in connection with the scheme. The terms on which the housing loan could be obtained were set out in sections 16 and 17 of the Housing Scheme Decree. The rate of interest charged was very low and it was possible to opt out of the scheme if no loan was obtained by the time the person reached the age of 60 or retired or changed his occupation. If a contributor decided to opt out in such circumstances, he was eligible for a refund within a period of three months, at a rate of interest prescribed by the Minister of Housing, which would in any case be higher than the normal rate paid by the banks. Under section 23 of the Decree, any such refund was exempt from income tax.

33. The CHAIRPERSON felt that he should again remind the delegation that the provisions of the law were one thing and their application another. Members of the Committee posed their questions on the basis of specific evidence to the effect that laws were not being enforced in the way in which they were written. A description of the provisions of the Housing Scheme Decree, therefore, was not helpful. To answer the point about the scheme, the Committee needed to know the total amount that had been taken in, the amount that had been loaned out for housing, and the amount that had been returned on request. The same was true in respect of evictions. If the Committee could be given statistics for the number of evictions, in Lagos alone, over the last two or three years, the number of successful cases brought against such evictions, and the amount of compensation that had allegedly been paid to those evicted, it would have a factual basis on which to make its assessment. Unfortunately, the responses it was receiving did not go in that direction.

34. Mr. OSAH (Nigeria) said that the obligations of States parties were clearly stipulated in the Covenant. In the case of article 11, the State had fulfilled its obligations by making adequate provision in the law. It was now being asked what effort it had made to comply with those provisions. The law

in respect of the housing scheme said that if a person paid so much and if, for sundry reasons, he could not obtain what he wanted, he would receive the money back with interest. What more could the State do? The law had been enacted and it was up to the individual to avail himself of its provisions. The same was true in the case of evictions. The courts still had jurisdiction over such matters and the question was, how many persons had gone to court and seen their claims refused? It was important to cite the legislation in order to show that the State had taken measures to comply with the Covenant.

35. In response to the question about the threefold rise in the price of oil in 1994, he said that the Petroleum Trust Fund had been set up precisely in order to utilize the difference between the earlier and the new price. The fund had helped to buy drugs for hospitals, and to build roads. Schools had been refurbished and money made available for local government projects. So far, the fund had performed well and the money had been used to good effect. The country had been divided into six zones and contracts had been awarded for 12,000 kilometres of federal roads as well as numerous water projects. Its effects in terms of roads, schools and hospitals could be seen on the ground, throughout Nigeria.

36. On the question whether oil production had resulted in malnutrition in Nigeria, he said that oil was in fact a blessing to the country. Nigeria had certainly not reached the stage of being unable to feed itself and having its children die of malnutrition.

37. On the question of what the Government had done in respect of oil pollution, he reminded the Committee of the information he had already provided on the Ogoni area. Using what had been done in Ogoni as a pilot study, the Government had proceeded in the same way in nearly all the oil-producing parts of Nigeria. Money had been made available for roads, farms, health centres and so on, in the rural areas. The Oil/Mineral Production Commission to which he had referred was allotted 10 per cent of the national budget accruing from oil production, specifically for use in such projects. Where there were undesirable side effects of oil production, money was also spent to rectify them.

38. In response to the question about the effect of evictions on women and the elderly, he said that the individuals affected had the right to compensation. Notice was usually given and adequate arrangements made to move them out so that the Government could complete its project. There was no discrimination in such entitlement.

39. Mr. RIEDEL questioned the Nigerian delegation's reading of the obligations of State parties under article 11 of the Covenant. There was no implication that adopting legislation was wrong. Rather, the disagreement was about how the article should be read. Describing what steps were taken to ensure the realization of the right to adequate food and housing, while it might involve citing legal enactments, also meant citing the results of such enactments. The Committee was more interested in actual court decisions or administrative practice than in the statutes themselves.

40. Mr. RATTRAY asked whether there were any requirements in Nigeria for an environmental impact assessment to be carried out prior to the approval of

development plans for the Ogoni region or other areas. If so, was there, in the course of drawing up the assessment, any hearing at which individual representations could be made and the various points of view assessed by the authorities? Further, could any judicial challenge be made as to the deleterious effects on the environment of the activities of oil companies or other organizations? He put his question in the context of article 11 because any such impact could have an impact in terms of the quality of life.

41. Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN said that her question whether there were any measures to address the violence to which women were subjected during forced evictions was designed to elicit what social and economic support the Government was offering, not what women could do for themselves.

42. Mr. TEXIER said that he presumed that the delegation had accepted his figure of 250,000 forcibly displaced street traders, since the only reply seemed to be that the Military Governor concerned was a good officer and very popular. Was it also true that their goods had been destroyed and that they had received no compensation?

43. Mr. WIMER asked the delegation to explain the structure of the Nigerian oil industry: were there some State and some foreign private oil companies, and how was that industry regulated?

44. Mr. MARCHAN ROMERO inquired whether individuals could bring actions against the State for damages to the environment caused by the oil industry.

45. Mr. OSAH (Nigeria) said that a committee of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) was responsible for conducting environmental impact analyses. Before any major project was undertaken, FEPA sent in a team of investigators to assess its potential impact on the environment and the local population. Environmental issues had begun to arise as early as the 1950s and 1960s, well before the establishment of FEPA.

46. If individuals were to seek redress in the courts for environmental damage, they first needed to be made aware of their rights; the Government was consequently undertaking awareness programmes. Persons seeking redress in such cases could appeal to the office of the Ombudsman, which was a less costly means than suing before the courts. In certain cases, individuals had been awarded compensation.

47. The Government made appropriate arrangements for the movement of evicted persons, with priority accorded to women, children and older persons. A particular area of Lagos was so overcrowded with street merchants that traffic could not circulate through the streets. The Government had constructed market stalls, moved the merchants into them, and charged a sum for their use. But the merchants had immediately vacated the stalls and moved back into the streets because they preferred not to pay the Government. The question arose as to what to do in such cases: law and order had to be enforced. The Government had sent in police to clear the area, and to ensure that traffic could circulate.

48. The federal Government regulated the oil industry, and issued permits for exploration and production. There were one or two State-owned oil companies, and a number of foreign ones.

Article 12

49. Mr. AHMED said that, according to a UNICEF report prepared in 1995, only 39 per cent of the Nigerian population had access to clean water. What was the reason? The EIU Country Profile for 1996 and 1997 furthermore stated that the 1996 budget capital allocation to health and social services had been 1.7 billion naira, or only 3.5 per cent of total capital allocations to federal ministries. Another 1995 UNICEF report stated that gross underfunding and inadequate management of health facilities had led to a rapid deterioration of health infrastructures in hospitals since the 1980s. Another source stated that hospital patients were obliged to pay for bed space, to buy their own drugs, and to supply their own needles, syringes and suture threads. He was indeed grieved to learn of the deterioration of health services in a country as potentially rich as Nigeria, which produced 2 billion barrels of oil per day. The Government should explain the reason for that phenomenon.

50. Mr. OSAH said that the 1998 federal budget had allocated between 11 and 12 billion naira to the Ministry of Health. Among the various ministries, it therefore ranked sixth in terms of the size of the allocation received. Large sums had been allocated to Nigeria's six teaching hospitals, as well as to other hospital facilities. The Government had noted the deteriorating state of the Nigerian health system, and had taken action to improve it. In addition, 14 billion naira had been allocated to the Ministry of Works and Housing, which was responsible for water resources, a substantial increase over the previous budget. The Government was aware of its responsibility to provide clean drinking water to the population, and in certain cases made arrangements for the delivery of fresh water into areas where it was not locally available.

51. The Nigerian delegation had requested its Government to forward by facsimile figures representing the federal budget allocations to health, education and other basic services over the course of the preceding five years, as requested by the Committee.

52. The CHAIRMAN asked what had inspired the six-fold increase in the budget allocation for health.

53. Mr. AHMED said that, in view of the information before him, he found it hard to accept the statements put forward by the Nigerian delegation. A UNICEF report indicated that school fees had been introduced in order to cover capital costs, causing a marked reduction in the number of children attending schools. Furthermore, it appeared that the health sector was suffering from the same brain drain as were the universities: doctors, tired of watching their patients die of simple ailments, were going abroad.

54. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO said that UNICEF had indicated that 500,000 Nigerians were HIV-positive, and that awareness campaigns did not adequately explain how the transmission of the illness could be prevented. Nigeria had one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the world, and

there were frequent cholera epidemics, killing large numbers of persons. The Government should explain what measures it was undertaking to combat those problems.

55. Mr. OSAH said that the Nigerian Government, responding to the reports and recommendations of international bodies, had understood that measures should be taken to improve matters in Nigeria. It had therefore taken the decision to increase budget allocations to health and education. Medical doctors had left the country in large numbers; for that reason the Government had chosen to allocate large sums to teaching hospitals. Hospital fees had been augmented as a response to inflation. If the Government was to provide adequate services, costs to the patient would have to increase.

56. Nigeria had embarked on a mass nationwide AIDS-education campaign on television, in the newspapers, and in schools, hospitals, and other public facilities. A substantial portion of the health budget was earmarked for AIDS. Various religious groups were also working to stem that epidemic. He had no figures concerning the maternal mortality rate, but was confident that recent health measures taken by the Government would cause that rate to decline.

57. In certain areas of Nigeria, outbreaks of cholera occurred seasonally, when water levels were low. The Government was taking steps to resolve that problem. The Petroleum Trust Fund had financed the construction of hospitals. Water schemes had been developed, such as the project undertaken in Ogoni to supply fresh water.

Article 13

58. Mr. THAPALIA said that both the initial report and the revised text of the initial report of Nigeria lacked sufficient data on the basis of which to judge that country's progress in the implementation of the Covenant. He requested the Nigerian Government to supply detailed answers to all the questions raised in the list of issues.

59. According to a report prepared by the United States Department of State in 1997, although primary education in Nigeria was compulsory, that was rarely enforced. Studies had shown that the declining enrolment was attributable mainly to the continuing deterioration of public schooling, and that many families had consequently been obliged to place their children in the labour market. According to other sources, during the first quarter of 1997 the Government had introduced a policy establishing a 1,000 per cent increase in university fees. In a related development, the National University Commission had ordered the closing of satellite campuses, straining the already overloaded capacities of the main campuses.

60. The literacy rate in Nigeria was estimated at 42 per cent. Of the 18.6 million children of primary school age, only 84.4 per cent were enrolled in school. How, under such circumstances, could Nigeria fulfill its commitment to educate all Nigerians by the year 2000? What measures, if any, had the Government envisaged or enacted to provide universal access to free primary education by that year?

61. Finally, it would be useful to know if the Nigerian Government had considered introducing human rights curricula into schools, universities and training centres for the armed forces and the police.

62. Mr. RIEDEL inquired about the consequences of the removal of the Nigerian Law School from Lagos to the new capital, Abuja. As he understood it, the student intake had been reduced by 30 per cent. What happened to students formerly enrolled in the school for whom there were no more places? Second, why was the State limiting access to education by outlawing satellite campuses for part-time students obliged to work in order to pay for their tertiary studies? Third, he raised the question of the introduction of fees at universities, and in that connection referred to articles 13.2 and 13.3 as well as article 2.1 of the Covenant.

63. Mr. WIMER asked how the issue of minority languages was handled in both public and private education.

64. Mr. PILLAY, referring specifically to article 13.2 (a), wondered whether the fact that 18 per cent of primary school age children were currently not attending school and that many schools were reported to have imposed fees in relation to primary education did not mean that Nigeria was in breach of its obligations under the Covenant.

65. The CHAIRMAN said that, according to UNICEF, the primary school enrolment rates for 1998 were 60 per cent for males and 58 per cent for females, the secondary school figures being, respectively, 33 per cent and 28 per cent.

66. Mr. TEXIER asked whether it was true that some Nigerian universities had been placed under the control of a military administrator, a situation that would seem to raise the problem of freedom of instruction.

67. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO, referring to question 47 of the list of issues, asked whether there had been any improvement in the wages and working conditions of teachers, which had led to a number of strikes in recent years.

68. Mr. RATTRAY asked whether, in the light of Nigeria's achievements in the field of education, its commitment to reach the education-for-all target by the year 2000 referred to in the revised report was realistic.

69. Mr. OSAH (Nigeria), taking up the last question first, said that the target referred to represented a vision which Nigeria hoped to realize, in particular by assigning 26 billion naira, or 30 per cent of its national budget, to education. On the subject of teachers' salaries, he said that the years 1994 and 1995 had indeed seen industrial action by teachers striking for better salaries and facilities. Teachers' salaries had now been streamlined to correspond to those of their counterparts within the civil service. The salaries of secondary school teachers, who had been to university and possessed special skills, were correspondingly higher.

70. Replying to the question concerning military administrators at universities, he said that if a soldier had the ability to restore peace and order at a university campus so as to enable students to proceed with their

normal academic work, he could not see anything wrong with such an appointment. Replying to a supplementary question by Mr. WIMER, he said that only one university in Nigeria had a military administrator at the present time.

71. Replying to the question concerning primary school attendance, he said that, according to his information, 85 per cent of male children and 74 per cent of female children were receiving primary school education, the rate of completion of primary school studies being 76 per cent and 78 per cent, respectively. In other words, only 15 per cent of Nigerian children countrywide were not attending primary school. All public primary schools were free, as also were public secondary schools, where, however, students were required to buy their own books. Girls' school uniforms were provided free of charge, which should be seen as an example of gender preference.

72. On the subject of languages, he said that the situation in Nigeria was somewhat similar to that in Switzerland. All educational establishments at the primary and secondary levels were required to teach the country's three main languages. The language in which teaching was dispensed varied depending on the region. All children were required to speak at least one of the three main languages in addition to their mother tongue.

73. Tertiary education at federal universities was free. Students were required to pay a small amount for their accommodation. The reason why the Government had decided to abolish satellite campuses was that the number of universities in Nigeria was already greater than in other countries of the region and was considered to be sufficient.

74. On the question of the transfer of the Law School from Lagos to Abuja, he said that the decision taken to reduce the intake had been taken in the best interests of the students themselves. Future lawyers were entitled to accommodation and other facilities of a quality not yet available to an unlimited extent in Abuja. The students' individual qualifications had also played a part in the decision. Lastly, he said that education in human rights was already being dispensed at a number of universities and was being introduced at the secondary school level.

Article 15

75. Mr. AHMED, turning to article 15 of the Covenant, asked for a definition of the Government's policy towards the country's 800 or so languages. Was it working towards a progressive fusion of the different languages and cultures through cross-fertilization or did it intend to preserve the country's cultural multiplicity? Was any university or other institution responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies in that respect?

76. Was Nigerian television public or private? Did television broadcasting reach all Nigerians, and what was the estimated number of television sets? Did the Government encourage cultural exchanges between Nigeria and its African neighbours or with the outside world? How many Nigerian students were sent abroad on Government scholarships, and to what countries? What ministry or institution, apart from the Ministry of Education, was in charge of cultural activities in the country, in particular the theatre, the film

industry, folkloric dancing, etc.? Did the Government allow or encourage the use of parabolic antennas with a view to receiving television programmes by satellite?

77. Mrs. JIMENEZ BUTRAGUEÑO asked whether the Government maintained contacts or exchanges with non-governmental organizations.

78. Mr. OSAH (Nigeria), replying to Mr. Ahmed's first question, said that it was the Government's policy to preserve the country's languages and cultures, of which there were actually some 200 rather than 800. No other policy would be acceptable to the various ethnic groups.

79. The State television company (NTV) was a public enterprise funded by the Government, providing nationwide coverage. There were also a number of private television stations. Cultural exchanges with other countries, both in Africa and elsewhere, were actively pursued on the basis of bilateral programmes. In addition to the Ministry of Education, cultural activities were also encouraged by various institutions, organizations and private bodies. A national theatre and a number of music and dance companies were in existence. Contacts with NGOs at government level took place principally within the National Commission for Human Rights. Lastly, there were no restrictions on satellite dishes and anyone who could afford to buy one could do so.

80. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the Nigerian delegation for its presence and for the answers it had provided. The Committee would, after due deliberation, formulate its concluding observations and present them at a public meeting towards the end of the session.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.